Before You Read

This selection also appears in Elements
of Literature.

Broken Chain by Gary Soto

LITERARY FOCUS: CONFLICT

Plot is a series of related events that take place in a story. Through the plot we learn what happens to a story's characters. Most main characters in stories grapple with one or more conflicts as the action unfolds. Conflict is a character's struggle to get what he or she wants. An external conflict occurs when a character struggles against outside forces. An internal conflict occurs when a struggle takes place within a character's own mind. As the plot of a story unfolds, the character acts to resolve the conflicts. Here are some examples of external and internal conflicts:

External Conflict	Internal Conflict
A camper goes on a hike, loses her compass, and can't find her way back.	An athlete can't decide whether to try out for the swim team or for the soccer team.
Two friends in a spelling bee compete for the grand prize.	Someone who once nearly drowned has to overcome a fear of the water.
An office worker gets locked in a supply closet.	A young actor experiences stage fright.

READING SKILLS: SUMMARIZING A PLOT

When you **summarize a plot**, you retell the main events in a story. Summarizing a plot helps you clarify what's happened to whom and when it happened. As you read "Broken Chain," look for Summarize notes in the margins. Then, use your own words to explain what has taken place.



Literary Skills Understand

Understand conflict.

Reading Skills

Summarize a story's plot.

Vocabulary Skills

Understand the history of English.



VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

PREVIEW SELECTION VOCABULARY

Before you read "Broken Chain," preview these words from the story.

apparent (ə·per'ənt) adj.: visible.

Alfonso was proud that the muscles on his stomach were apparent.

sullen (sul'ən) adj.: grumpy; resentful.

Ernie became sullen when the girls didn't show up for the date.

impulse (im'puls') n.: urge.

Alfonso regretted his impulse to clean his bike chain.

retrieved (ri·trēvd') v.: got back.

Alfonso retrieved the chain he had thrown away.

emerged (ē·murjd') v.: came out.

Alfonso emerged from behind the hedge to meet Sandra.

CLARIFYING WORD MEANINGS: LATIN ROOTS

A long time ago ancient Romans conquered much of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. As a result, their language, Latin, is reflected in many modern-day languages of those places. About 60 percent of the English language, for example, can be traced to Latin. Here are some examples, taken from the Vocabulary words above (the abbreviation *L* stands for "Latin").

Word	Origin	Latin Meaning
apparent	L apparere	"to appear"
sullen	L solus	"alone"
impulse	L impellere	"to drive"
emerged	L e– "out" + mergere	"to immerse"

Pause at the Word Study notes as you read "Broken Chain" to learn about the Latin origins of more words.

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Broken Chain

Gary Soto



IDENTIFY

Circle the name of the character introduced in the first paragraph. Underline two things he is doing to try to change the way he looks.

VOCABULARY

apparent (ə·per'ənt) adj.: visible; easily seen; obvious.

IDENTIFY

Why doesn't Alfonso dare to color his hair (lines 15–21)?

"Broken Chain" from Baseball in April and Other Stories by Gary Soto. Copyright © 1990 by Gary Soto. Reproduced by permission of Harcourt, Inc. Alfonso sat on the porch trying to push his crooked teeth to where he thought they belonged. He hated the way he looked. Last week he did fifty sit-ups a day, thinking that he would burn those already **apparent** ripples on his stomach to even deeper ripples, dark ones, so when he went swimming at the canal next summer, girls in cut-offs would notice. And the guys would think he was tough, someone who could take a punch and give it back. He wanted "cuts" like those he had seen on a calendar of an Aztec¹ warrior standing on a pyramid with a woman in his arms. (Even she had cuts he could see beneath her thin dress.) The calendar hung above the cash register at La Plaza. Orsua, the owner, said Alfonso could have the calendar at the end of the year if the waitress, Yolanda, didn't take it first.

Alfonso studied the magazine pictures of rock stars for a hairstyle. He liked the way Prince looked—and the bass player from Los Lobos. Alfonso thought he would look cool with his hair razored into a V in the back and streaked purple. But he knew his mother wouldn't go for it. And his

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^{1.} Aztec: member of an American Indian people of what is now Mexico.

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father, who was puro Mexicano, would sit in his chair after work, **sullen** as a toad, and call him "sissy."

Alfonso didn't dare color his hair. But one day he had had it butched on the top, like in the magazines. His father had come home that evening from a softball game, happy that his team had drilled four homers in a thirteen-to-five bashing of Color Tile. He'd swaggered into the living room but had stopped cold when he saw Alfonso and asked, not joking but with real concern, "Did you hurt your head at school? ¿Qué pasó?"²

Alfonso had pretended not to hear his father and had gone to his room, where he studied his hair from all angles in the mirror. He liked what he saw until he smiled and realized for the first time that his teeth were crooked, like a pile of wrecked cars. He grew depressed and turned away from the mirror. He sat on his bed and leafed through the rock magazine until he came to the rock star with the butched top. His mouth was closed, but Alfonso was sure his teeth weren't crooked.

Alfonso didn't want to be the handsomest kid at school, but he was determined to be better looking than average. The next day he spent his lawn-mowing money on a new shirt and, with a pocketknife, scooped the moons of dirt from under his fingernails.

He spent hours in front of the mirror trying to herd his teeth into place with his thumb. He asked his mother if he could have braces, like Frankie Molina, her godson, but he asked at the wrong time. She was at the kitchen table licking the envelope to the house payment. She glared up at him. "Do you think money grows on trees?"

His mother clipped coupons from magazines and newspapers, kept a vegetable garden in the summer, and

VOCABULARY

sullen (sul'ən) *adj.:* grumpy; resentful.

IDENTIFY

What do you learn about Alfonso's father in lines 22–29?

INFER

Re-read lines 44–55. Based on these details, what inference can you make about the family's financial situation?

^{2. ¿}Qué pasó? (kā' pä·sô'): Spanish for "What happened?"

INTERPRET

Pause at line 68. List three important things you've learned about Alfonso so far. What main idea about Alfonso's character do these details add up to? State that main idea in a complete sentence.

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WORD STUDY

Depressed (dē·prest'), in line 70, means "gloomy; sad." It comes from the Latin roots de-, meaning "down," and premere, meaning "to press."

shopped at Penney's and K-Mart. Their family ate a lot of frijoles,³ which was OK because nothing else tasted so good, though one time Alfonso had had Chinese pot stickers⁴ and thought they were the next best food in the world.

He didn't ask his mother for braces again, even when she was in a better mood. He decided to fix his teeth by pushing on them with his thumbs. After breakfast that Saturday he went to his room, closed the door quietly, turned the radio on, and pushed for three hours straight.

He pushed for ten minutes, rested for five, and every half hour, during a radio commercial, checked to see if his smile had improved. It hadn't.

Eventually he grew bored and went outside with an old gym sock to wipe down his bike, a ten-speed from Montgomery Ward. His thumbs were tired and wrinkled and pink, the way they got when he stayed in the bathtub too long.

Alfonso's older brother, Ernie, rode up on *his* Montgomery Ward bicycle looking depressed. He parked his bike against the peach tree and sat on the back steps, keeping his head down and stepping on ants that came too close.

Alfonso knew better than to say anything when Ernie looked mad. He turned his bike over, balancing it on the handlebars and seat, and flossed the spokes with the sock. When he was finished, he pressed a knuckle to his teeth until they tingled.

Ernie groaned and said, "Ah, man."

Alfonso waited a few minutes before asking, "What's the matter?" He pretended not to be too interested. He picked up a wad of steel wool and continued cleaning the spokes.

^{3.} frijoles (frē-khô'lās): Spanish for "beans."

^{4.} pot stickers n.: dumplings.

Ernie hesitated, not sure if Alfonso would laugh. But it came out. "Those girls didn't show up. And you better not laugh."

"What girls?"

Then Alfonso remembered his brother bragging about how he and Frostie met two girls from Kings Canyon Junior High last week on Halloween night. They were dressed as Gypsies, the costume for all poor Chicanas⁵—they just had to borrow scarves and gaudy red lipstick from their abuelitas.⁶

Alfonso walked over to his brother. He compared their two bikes: His gleamed like a handful of dimes, while Ernie's looked dirty.

"They said we were supposed to wait at the corner. But they didn't show up. Me and Frostie waited and waited. . . . They were playing games with us."

Alfonso thought that was a pretty dirty trick but sort of funny too. He would have to try that someday.

"Were they cute?" Alfonso asked.

"I guess so."

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"Do you think you could recognize them?"

"If they were wearing red lipstick, maybe."

Alfonso sat with his brother in silence, both of them smearing ants with their floppy high tops. Girls could sure act weird, especially the ones you meet on Halloween.

Later that day, Alfonso sat on the porch pressing on his teeth. Press, relax; press, relax. His portable radio was on, but not loud enough to make Mr. Rojas come down the steps and wave his cane at him.

Alfonso's father drove up. Alfonso could tell by the way he sat in his truck, a Datsun with a different-colored front fender, that his team had lost their softball game. Alfonso got

SUMMARIZE

Re-read lines 69–96. Summarize what has happened in the story so far.

^{5.} Chicanas (chi·kä'nəz): Mexican American girls and women.

^{6.} abuelitas (ä'bwā·lē'täs) *n.:* in Spanish, an affectionate term for "grandmothers," like *grandmas* in English.

CLARIFY Re-read lines 110-117. Why does Alfonso go to the back yard? INTERPRET Underline Alfonso's good deed in lines 118-128. What does it show about his character?

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WORD STUDY

Observation (äb'zər·vā'shən), in line 142, means "a comment or remark based on something you've seen." It comes from Latin observatio, meaning "outward display."

off the porch in a hurry because he knew his father would be in a bad mood. He went to the back yard, where he unlocked his bike, sat on it with the kickstand down, and pressed on his teeth. He punched himself in the stomach, and growled, "Cuts." Then he patted his butch and whispered, "Fresh."

After a while Alfonso pedaled up the street, hands in his pockets, toward Foster's Freeze, where he was chased by a ratlike Chihuahua. At his old school, John Burroughs Elementary, he found a kid hanging upside down on the top of a barbed-wire fence with a girl looking up at him. Alfonso skidded to a stop and helped the kid untangle his pants from the barbed wire. The kid was grateful. He had been afraid he would have to stay up there all night. His sister, who was Alfonso's age, was also grateful. If she had to go home and tell her mother that Frankie was stuck on a fence and couldn't get down, she would get scolded.

"Thanks," she said. "What's your name?"

Alfonso remembered her from his school and noticed that she was kind of cute, with ponytails and straight teeth. "Alfonso. You go to my school, huh?"

"Yeah. I've seen you around. You live nearby?"

"Over on Madison."

"My uncle used to live on that street, but he moved to Stockton."

"Stockton's near Sacramento, isn't it?"

"You been there?"

"No." Alfonso looked down at his shoes. He wanted to say something clever the way people do on TV. But the only thing he could think to say was that the governor lived in Sacramento. As soon as he shared this observation, he winced inside.

^{7.} Chihuahua (chi·wa'wa): small dog with large pointed ears.

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Alfonso walked with the girl and the boy as they started for home. They didn't talk much. Every few steps, the girl, whose name was Sandra, would look at him out of the corner of her eye, and Alfonso would look away. He learned that she was in seventh grade, just like him, and that she had a pet terrier named Queenie. Her father was a mechanic at Rudy's Speedy Repair, and her mother was a teacher's aide at Jefferson Elementary.

When they came to the street, Alfonso and Sandra stopped at her corner, but her brother ran home. Alfonso watched him stop in the front yard to talk to a lady he guessed was their mother. She was raking leaves into a pile.

"I live over there," she said, pointing.

Alfonso looked over her shoulder for a long time, trying to muster enough nerve to ask her if she'd like to go bike riding tomorrow.

Shyly, he asked, "You wanna go bike riding?"

"Maybe." She played with a ponytail and crossed one leg in front of the other. "But my bike has a flat."

"I can get my brother's bike. He won't mind."

She thought a moment before she said, "OK. But not tomorrow. I have to go to my aunt's."

"How about after school on Monday?"

"I have to take care of my brother until my mom comes home from work. How 'bout four-thirty?"

"OK," he said. "Four-thirty." Instead of parting immediately, they talked for a while, asking questions like "Who's your favorite group?" "Have you ever been on the Big Dipper at Santa Cruz?" and "Have you ever tasted pot stickers?" But the question-and-answer period ended when Sandra's mother called her home.

Alfonso took off as fast as he could on his bike, jumped the curb, and, cool as he could be, raced away with

SUMMARIZE

Re-read lines 118–163. Summarize how Alfonso meets Sandra and how he goes about asking her to see him again.

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PREDICT Pause at line 184. Will Ernie let Alfonso borrow his bike? Tell what you think will happen next.

Re-read the boxed passage. As each speaker changes, think about who is speaking and how he might say the words. Then, read the passage aloud, trying to express the different feelings of the

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FLUENCY

characters.

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his hands stuffed in his pockets. But when he looked back over his shoulder, the wind raking through his butch, Sandra wasn't even looking. She was already on her lawn, heading for the porch.

That night he took a bath, pampered his hair into place, and did more than his usual set of exercises. In bed, in between the push-and-rest on his teeth, he pestered his brother to let him borrow his bike.

"Come on, Ernie," he whined. "Just for an hour."

"Chale,8 I might want to use it."

"Come on, man, I'll let you have my trick-or-treat candy."

"What you got?"

"Three baby Milky Ways and some Skittles."

"Who's going to use it?"

Alfonso hesitated, then risked the truth. "I met this girl. She doesn't live too far."

Ernie rolled over on his stomach and stared at the outline of his brother, whose head was resting on his elbow.

"You got a girlfriend?"

"She ain't my girlfriend, just a girl."

"What does she look like?"

"Like a girl."

"Come on, what does she look like?"

"She's got ponytails and a little brother."

"Ponytails! Those girls who messed with Frostie and me had ponytails. Is she cool?"

"I think so."

Ernie sat up in bed. "I bet you that's her."

Alfonso felt his stomach knot up. "She's going to be my girlfriend, not yours!"

"I'm going to get even with her!"

^{8.} chale (chä'lā): Spanish slang expression roughly meaning "it's not possible."

"You better not touch her," Alfonso snarled, throwing a wadded Kleenex at him. "I'll run you over with my bike."

For the next hour, until their mother threatened them from the living room to be quiet or else, they argued whether it was the same girl who had stood Ernie up. Alfonso said over and over that she was too nice to pull a stunt like that. But Ernie argued that she lived only two blocks from where those girls had told them to wait, that she was in the same grade, and, the clincher, that she had ponytails. Secretly, however, Ernie was jealous that his brother, two years younger than himself, might have found a girlfriend.

Sunday morning, Ernie and Alfonso stayed away from each other, though over breakfast they fought over the last tortilla. Their mother, sewing at the kitchen table, warned them to knock it off. At church they made faces at one another when the priest, Father Jerry, wasn't looking. Ernie punched Alfonso in the arm, and Alfonso, his eyes wide with anger, punched back.

Monday morning they hurried to school on their bikes, neither saying a word, though they rode side by side. In first period, Alfonso worried himself sick. How would he borrow a bike for her? He considered asking his best friend, Raul, for his bike. But Alfonso knew Raul, a paperboy with dollar signs in his eyes, would charge him, and he had less than sixty cents, counting the soda bottles he could cash.

Between history and math, Alfonso saw Sandra and her girlfriend huddling at their lockers. He hurried by without being seen.

During lunch Alfonso hid in metal shop so he wouldn't run into Sandra. What would he say to her? If he weren't mad at his brother, he could ask Ernie what girls and guys talk about. But he *was* mad, and anyway, Ernie was pitching nickels with his friends.

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 181–210. Then, identify the **conflict** between the brothers. What two things are Alfonso and Ernie fighting over?

INTERPRET

An idiom is a figure of speech—its actual meaning is different from its literal meaning. Underline the idiom in lines 231–232. Explain what it means.

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Votes_		

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 256. When Sandra said she'd meet Alfonso and go bike riding with him, everything seemed to be going well. List the **complications** in the plot that have made Alfonso's situation increasingly desperate.

VOCABULARY

impulse (im'puls') n.: urge.

retrieved (ri-trēvd') v.: got back.

Alfonso hurried home after school. He did the morning dishes as his mother had asked and raked the leaves. After finishing his chores, he did a hundred sit-ups, pushed on his teeth until they hurt, showered, and combed his hair into a perfect butch. He then stepped out to the patio to clean his bike. On an **impulse**, he removed the chain to wipe off the gritty oil. But while he was unhooking it from the back sprocket, it snapped. The chain lay in his hand like a dead snake.

Alfonso couldn't believe his luck. Now, not only did he not have an extra bike for Sandra, he had no bike for himself. Frustrated and on the verge of tears, he flung the chain as far as he could. It landed with a hard slap against the back fence and spooked his sleeping cat, Benny. Benny looked around, blinking his soft gray eyes, and went back to sleep.

Alfonso **retrieved** the chain, which was hopelessly broken. He cursed himself for being stupid, yelled at his bike



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for being cheap, and slammed the chain onto the cement. The chain snapped in another place and hit him when it popped up, slicing his hand like a snake's fang.

"Ow!" he cried, his mouth immediately going to his hand to suck on the wound.

After a dab of iodine, which only made his cut hurt more, and a lot of thought, he went to the bedroom to plead with Ernie, who was changing to his after-school clothes.

"Come on, man, let me use it," Alfonso pleaded.
"Please, Ernie, I'll do anything."

Although Ernie could see Alfonso's desperation, he had plans with his friend Raymundo. They were going to catch frogs at the Mayfair canal. He felt sorry for his brother and gave him a stick of gum to make him feel better, but there was nothing he could do. The canal was three miles away, and the frogs were waiting.

Alfonso took the stick of gum, placed it in his shirt pocket, and left the bedroom with his head down. He went outside, slamming the screen door behind him, and sat in the alley behind his house. A sparrow landed in the weeds, and when it tried to come close, Alfonso screamed for it to scram. The sparrow responded with a squeaky chirp and flew away.

At four he decided to get it over with and started walking to Sandra's house, trudging slowly, as if he were waist-deep in water. Shame colored his face. How could he disappoint his first date? She would probably laugh. She might even call him menso.⁹

He stopped at the corner where they were supposed to meet and watched her house. But there was no one outside, only a rake leaning against the steps.

Why did he have to take the chain off? he scolded himself. He always messed things up when he tried to take them apart, like the time he tried to repad his baseball mitt. He

EVALUATE

Pause at line 274. Why won't Ernie lend Alfonso his bike? What do you think of this reason?

WORD STUDY

The noun desperation (des'pər·ā'shən), in line 269, is from Latin de—, "without," and sperare, "to hope." What is a synonym for desperation?

IDENTIFY

Underline the details in lines 275–285 that show that Alfonso is upset.

^{9.} menso (men'sô) adj.: Spanish for "stupid."

PREDICT Pause at line 300 and tell what you think will happen in the rest of the story.

IDENTIFY

The climax is the most exciting moment in the plot, when the outcome of the main conflict is decided. Underline the passage in lines 310–323 that describes the climax in this story.

had unlaced the mitt and filled the pocket with cotton balls. But when he tried to put it back together, he had forgotten how it laced up. Everything became tangled like kite string. When he showed the mess to his mother, who was at the stove cooking dinner, she scolded him but put it back together and didn't tell his father what a dumb thing he had done.

Now he had to face Sandra and say, "I broke my bike, and my stingy brother took off on his."

He waited at the corner a few minutes, hiding behind a hedge for what seemed like forever. Just as he was starting to think about going home, he heard footsteps and knew it was too late. His hands, moist from worry, hung at his sides and a thread of sweat raced down his armpit.

He peeked through the hedge. She was wearing a sweater with a checkerboard pattern. A red purse was slung over her shoulder. He could see her looking for him, standing on tiptoe to see if he was coming around the corner.

What have I done? Alfonso thought. He bit his lip, called himself menso, and pounded his palm against his forehead. Someone slapped the back of his head. He turned around and saw Ernie.

"We got the frogs, Alfonso," he said, holding up a wiggling plastic bag. "I'll show you later."

Ernie looked through the hedge, with one eye closed, at the girl. "She's not the one who messed with Frostie and me," he said finally. "You still wanna borrow my bike?"

Alfonso couldn't believe his luck. What a brother! What a pal! He promised to take Ernie's turn next time it was his turn to do the dishes. Ernie hopped on Raymundo's handlebars and said he would remember that promise. Then he was gone as they took off without looking back.

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Part 1

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Free of worry now that his brother had come through, Alfonso **emerged** from behind the hedge with Ernie's bike, which was mud-splashed but better than nothing. Sandra waved.

"Hi," she said.

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"Hi," he said back.

She looked cheerful. Alfonso told her his bike was broken and asked if she wanted to ride with him.

"Sounds good," she said, and jumped on the crossbar.

It took all of Alfonso's strength to steady the bike. He started off slowly, gritting his teeth, because she was heavier than he thought. But once he got going, it got easier. He pedaled smoothly, sometimes with only one hand on the handlebars, as they sped up one street and down another. Whenever he ran over a pothole, which was often, she screamed with delight, and once, when it looked like they were going to crash, she placed her hand over his, and it felt like love.

VOCABULARY

emerged (ē·mʉrjd') *v.:* came out.

EXTEND

Suppose that Ernie had not
brought the bike. Suggest
two other ways of ending
this story.

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SKILLS PRACTICE

Broken Chain



Plot Diagram To fill out the plot diagram, first identify the **basic situation** and **conflict** in "Broken Chain." Then, identify the main **complications** that lead to the climax. Next, describe the **climax** of the story. Finally, tell what happens in the **resolution** of the story. If you like to draw, you might draw little pictures showing one of the complications.

Basic Situation and Conflict: Complications (problems, events):	Climax:
	Resolution:

Broken Chain

VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION

A. History of the English Language: Latin Roots Write the word from the Word Bank that has the same root as the word in the middle column.

Root	Related Word	Word Bank Word
solus	solo	1.
apparere	disappear	2.
e– + mergere	emergency	3.

Word Bank

apparent sullen impulse retrieved emerged

- **B. Reading Comprehension** Answer each question below.
- 1. How do Alfonso and Sandra meet?
- 2. Why do Alfonso and Ernie quarrel about Sandra?
- **3.** What conflict does Alfonso face when his bicycle chain breaks?
- **4.** At the end of the story, why does Ernie let Alfonso borrow his bike?



Vocabulary Skills Understand the history of English.

Answers to Annotations and Exercises

Part One



Broken Chain, page 4

Page 6

IDENTIFY

Alfonso is the character introduced in the first paragraph. Details that show how he is trying to change the way he looks are "push his crooked teeth to where he thought they belonged" and "did fifty situps a day."

IDENTIFY

Alfonso wouldn't dare color his hair because his mother wouldn't like it and his father would "call him 'sissy."

Page 7

IDENTIFY

Answers will vary. Possible responses: (1) Alfonso's father is happy and good-natured when he is successful. (2) Alfonso's father doesn't understand his son's fashion interests.

INFER

Possible response: The family doesn't have a lot of money.

Page 8

INTERPRET

Possible response: Three important things I've learned about Alfonso are (1) he cares about his appearance; (2) he has ideas about how to improve his appearance; (3) he works hard at improving his appearance.

A possible main idea about Alfonso's character is that he is resourceful and self-reliant.

Page 9

SUMMARIZE

Possible summary: After Alfonso has spent the morning worrying about the appearance of his hair and teeth, he goes out to clean his bicycle. While he is cleaning, his brother, Ernie, comes home. Ernie is angry because he and his friend Frostie were stood up by two girls they met at a Halloween party.

Page 10

CLARIFY

Possible response: Alfonso goes to the backyard to avoid his father, who is in a bad mood.

INTERPRET

Alfonso's good deed is that he "helped the kid untangle his pants from the barbed wire." The deed shows that Alfonso is nice and helpful.

Page 11

SUMMARIZE

Possible summary: Alfonso meets Sandra when he helps her brother get off the fence. He talks with her while he walks her home. He finally gets up the nerve to ask her to go bike riding.

Page 12

PREDICT

Possible predictions: Ernie will lend his bike to Alfonso; Ernie will refuse, and Alfonso will have to find another bike.

Page 13

IDENTIFY

Alfonso and Ernie are fighting because Alfonso wants to use Ernie's bike and because Ernie claims that Sandra is the same girl who stood him up. Alfonso argues that she is not the same one.

INTERPRET

The idiom is "with dollar signs in his eyes." This idiom means "anxious to make money."

Page 14

IDENTIFY

Possible complications: Because Alfonso and Ernie get in a fight, Ernie won't lend Alfonso his bike. Then Alfonso breaks his bike chain and now has no extra bike for Sandra and no bike for himself.

Page 15

EVALUATE

Ernie won't lend Alfonso his bike because he needs it to go catch frogs at the canal. Most students will say this is not a good reason because Ernie could catch frogs at another time.

WORD STUDY

Possible synonyms for *desperation* are *hopelessness* and *panic*.

IDENTIFY

Details in lines 275–285 that show Alfonso is upset include "with his head down"; "slamming the screen door behind him"; "Alfonso screamed for [the sparrow] to scram"; "trudging slowly"; and "Shame colored his face."

Page 16

PREDICT

Possible predictions: Sandra won't care about the bike, and they'll have fun without it; Ernie will offer his bike at the last minute, and Alfonso and Sandra will ride together.

IDENTIFY

Possible response: The climax, when the outcome of the main conflict is decided, occurs when Ernie offers Alfonso his bike.

Page 17

EXTEND

Answers will vary. Two possible endings: (1) Alfonso could apologize to Sandra for not bringing a bike but suggest instead that they go for a walk. She would forgive him and agree to go on a walk. (2) Alfonso could explain the situation to Sandra. Then she would laugh and fix the bike chain, muttering how boys can't fix anything. Then they would go for a ride with her on the crossbar.

Page 18

■ Possible Answers to Skills Practice

Plot Diagram (page 18)

Basic Situation and Conflict: Alfonso meets Sandra and asks her to go bike riding, but he has only one

Complications (problems, events): Ernie won't lend Alfonso his bike; Alfonso breaks the chain on his bike. Alfonso goes to Sandra's house to tell her they can't go bike riding.

Climax: Ernie arrives in time to lend Alfonso his

Resolution: Alfonso and Sandra go bike riding.

■ Possible Answers to Skills Review

Vocabulary and Comprehension (page 19)

- **A.** 1. sullen
 - 2. apparent
 - 3. emerged

- **B.** 1. Alfonso and Sandra meet when Alfonso helps Sandra's brother untangle his pants from a barbed-wire fence.
 - 2. Alfonso and Ernie fight over Sandra because Ernie thinks she might be one of the girls who stood him up.
 - 3. The conflict Alfonso faces when his bicycle chain breaks is that he now has no bike to take Sandra riding.
 - 4. (1) Ernie lets Alfonso borrow his bike because he wants to help his little brother out; (2) When Ernie sees that Sandra was not the

girl who stood him up, he agrees to lend his bike to Alfonso.

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IDENTIFY

The Landlady, page 20

The name of the character is Billy Weaver. Possible details that establish the setting: "traveled down from London on the slow afternoon train"; "nine o'clock in the evening"; "the moon was coming up out of a clear starry sky over the houses opposite the station entrance"; "the air was deadly cold and the wind was like a flat blade of ice on his cheeks."

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INFER

Possible response: Billy's mood could be described as upbeat or eager.

VISUALIZE

Details that make the boardinghouse seem inviting and comfortable: "There was a vase of yellow chrysanthemums, tall and beautiful, standing just underneath the notice"; "Green curtains (some sort of velvety material) were hanging down on either side of the window"; "the first thing he saw was a bright fire burning in the hearth"; "in front of the fire, a pretty little dachshund was curled up asleep with its nose tucked into its belly"; [The room] "was filled with pleasant furniture"; "There was a baby grand piano and a big sofa and several plump armchairs."

Page 23

IDENTIFY

Details that describe the benefits of staying at the pub: "a pub would be more congenial"; "There would be beer and darts"; "lots of people to talk to"; "it would probably be a good bit cheaper, too."

PREDICT

Answers will vary.